

Elite Opponents

Salamanders

By Andy Collins



This column aims to provide DMs with interesting opponents to pit against the PCs in their campaigns. Building off of a simple base -- typically a standard monster from the *Monster Manual* -- each column uses the building blocks provided in the rulebooks to craft a variety of foes. Through the addition of class levels or templates, or even via simple HD advancement, the creatures presented in this column are transformed from run-of-the-mill opponents into memorable foes. Check out this column every month for a new batch of formidable enemies built from a different monster!

The Salamander: A Sizzling Challenge

This month, our base creature is the salamander. The various kinds of salamanders can provide excellent long-term foes for your PCs. At CR 3, the flamebrother works well as a low-level opponent, and even a single flamebrother is smart enough to lead a group of lesser minions. Later, average salamanders (CR 6) make challenging foes -- either alone or as the leaders of small groups, which often include their lesser kin. At higher levels, the noble salamanders (CR 10) can serve as cruel taskmasters, lording it over weaker salamanders or even other evil creatures -- preferably fire-resistant ones such as mephits, bearded devils, kytons, or evil azers.



Layering class levels onto a salamander is a relatively easy task. Lawful evil salamanders make particularly good blackguards, but almost any class makes a favorable addition, thanks to the creatures' generally high ability scores. Adding templates is a little trickier because so few are applicable to outsiders. The three example salamanders in this column present a variety of approaches, and their Challenge Ratings range from 6 to 13.

Coalwisp: Flamebrother Salamander Ranger

Shunned by salamander society because he lacked the "killer instinct," Coalwisp was abandoned on the Material Plane at an early age. By hardening himself both physically and mentally, he managed to survive and even thrive. Now an adult, he has dedicated himself to hunting down others of his kind, and he seeks out any opportunity to destroy salamanders. Though he does not share their evil nature, he has managed to develop a single-minded approach to the destruction of his brethren that would probably impress any

who witnessed it.

If your campaign features salamanders or other fire-based outsiders as long-term foes, Coalwisp can even be used as a PC. His effective character level is 10th, and his CR has been raised from 5 (3 for a flamebrother and 2 for his ranger levels) to 6 because of his elite ability scores.

Coalwisp: Male flamebrother salamander ranger 2; CR 6; Small outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 4d8+12 plus 2d8+6; hp 49; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +6; Grp +5; Atk +11 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d6 fire/x3, masterwork spear) or +12 ranged (1d6+4/x3, +1 *composite longbow* [+3 Str bonus]); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d6 fire/x3, masterwork spear) and +8 melee (1d4+1 plus 1d6 fire, tail slap) or +12/+7 ranged (1d6+4/x3, +1 *composite longbow* [+3 Str bonus]) or +10/+10/+5 ranged (1d6+4/x3, +1 *composite longbow* [+3 Str bonus] with Rapid Shot); SA constrict (1d4 plus 1d6 fire), heat, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., favored enemy (fire outsiders +2), immunity to fire, outsider traits, vulnerability to cold, wild empathy +2; AL LN; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Appraise (forged metal items) +4, Bluff +7, Craft (blacksmithing) +13, Diplomacy +11, Hide +16, Intimidate +9, Jump -3, Listen +14, Move Silently +12, Search +9, Sense Motive +10, Spot +14, Survival +11; Alertness, Multiattack, Rapid ShotB, TrackB, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Constrict (Ex): Coalwisp automatically deals 1d4 points of damage plus 1d6 points of fire damage with a successful grapple check.

Heat (Ex): Each of Coalwisp's natural weapons and metallic weapons conducts heat, dealing an additional 1d6 points of fire damage (included above) with each successful hit.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Coalwisp must hit a creature of up to Medium size with his tail slap attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Favored Enemy: Coalwisp gains a +2 bonus on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against outsiders with the fire subtype. He gets the same bonus on weapon damage rolls against creatures of this type.

Outsider Traits: Coalwisp cannot be raised or resurrected (though a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore life).

Wild Empathy (Ex): Coalwisp can use body language, vocalizations, and demeanor to improve the attitude of an animal (such as a bear or a monitor lizard). This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check to improve the attitude of a person. His bonus on the check is +2. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly. Coalwisp and the animal must study each other for 1 minute. This ability can also be used to influence a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, but the ranger takes a -4 penalty on the check.

Possessions: Masterwork spear, +1 *composite longbow* (+3 Str bonus), 5 +1 *frost arrows*, 15 arrows, *bracers of armor* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of cat's grace*, 2 *potions of shield of faith* (+2), 130 gp.

Brimstone's Children: Fiendish Average Salamanders

Brimstone, a half-fiend/half-noble salamander (see below) has spawned several offspring, all of which have the fiendish template. (This template normally can't be applied to outsiders such as salamanders, but these creatures are unusual exceptions because of Brimstone's half-fiendish nature.) Three to five of Brimstone's children typically accompany him at any given time, and groups of them can be found carrying out his dire plans virtually anywhere. Their resistance to cold helps offset their natural vulnerability, though powerful cold-based attacks still send them running. The jeweled bracer that each of Brimstone's children wears is similar in design to Brimstone's amulet.

A fiendish average salamander's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Fiendish Average Salamander: CR 8; Medium outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 9d8+18; hp 58; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 fire/x3, +1 *spear*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 fire/x3, +1 *spear*) and +9 melee (2d6+1 plus 1d6 fire, tail slap); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with tail); SA constrict 2d6+1 plus 1d6 fire, heat, improved grab, smite good +9; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, outsider traits, resistance (cold 10), spell resistance 14, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Appraise (forged metal items) +4, Bluff +13, Craft (blacksmithing) +18, Diplomacy +17, Hide +13, Intimidate +15, Jump -4, Listen +16, Move Silently +13, Search +14, Sense Motive +14, Spot +16; Alertness, Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Constrict (Ex): The fiendish average salamander automatically deals 2d6+1 points of damage plus 1d6 points of fire damage with a successful grapple check.

Heat (Ex): Each of the fiendish average salamander's natural weapons and metallic weapons conducts heat, dealing an additional 1d6 points of fire damage (included above) with each successful hit.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the fiendish average salamander must hit a creature of up to Large size with his tail slap attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, a fiendish average salamander can make a normal melee attack to deal 9 points of extra damage against a good foe.

Outsider Traits: The fiendish average salamander cannot be raised or resurrected (though a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore life).

Possessions: +1 *spear*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, adamantite bracer set with ruby (1,000 gp).

Brimstone: Half-Fiend/Half-Noble Salamander

Brimstone's father traveled the lower planes for decades before returning to the Elemental Plane of Fire. During that time, the unholy taint of Hell took hold in the salamander's very soul, making him a fiend in fact as well as in outlook. When Brimstone was hatched, he displayed significant fiendish traits (including a pair of bat wings) because of his father's altered nature. Brimstone's father deemed the half-fiend larval salamander a gift from the gods and raised him to become a leader of his people.

Today, Brimstone splits his time between the Elemental Plane of Fire and the Nine Hells of Baator. In addition to the many average salamanders that serve him, he maintains a cadre of his own children -- all of whom are fiendish salamanders (see above) -- as a strike force and personal guard. Eventually, Brimstone hopes to establish a mighty army with which he can conquer a swath of the Material Plane.

Brimstone appears as a blood-red noble salamander with a pair of crimson bat wings streaked with black. His ruby-studded adamantine amulet, crafted for him by a team of azer slaves, is his most prized possession. Each of his fiendish salamander minions wears a single bracer with a similar design.

Brimstone's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Brimstone: Male half-fiend/half-noble salamander; CR 13; Large outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 15d8+60; hp 127; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (average); AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +15; Grp +27; Atk +22 melee (1d6+8 plus 1d8 fire, claw) or +25 melee (2d6+15 plus 1d8 fire/x3, +3 *longspear*); Full Atk +22 melee (1d6+8 plus 1d8 fire, 2 claws) and +20 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d8 fire, bite) or +25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+15 plus 1d8 fire/x3, +3 *longspear*) and +20 melee (2d8+4 plus 1d8 fire, tail slap); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with tail); SA constrict 2d8+3 plus 1d8 fire, heat, improved grab, smite good +15, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 15/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunities (fire, poison), outsider traits, resistances (acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10), spell resistance 25, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 26, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 20, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Appraise (forged metal items) +7, Bluff +21, Craft (blacksmithing) +30, Craft (weaponsmithing) +23, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +25, Hide +17, Intimidate +23, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +22, Move Silently +21, Search +23, Sense Motive +20, Spot +22; Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft [blacksmithing]).

Constrict (Ex): Brimstone automatically deals 2d8+3 points of damage plus 1d8 points of fire damage with a successful grapple check.

Heat (Ex): Each of Brimstone's natural weapons and metallic weapons conducts heat, dealing an additional 1d8 points of fire damage (included above) with each successful hit.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Brimstone must hit a creature of up to Huge size with his tail slap attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, Brimstone can make a normal melee attack to deal 15 points of extra damage against a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day -- *burning hands* (DC 14), *darkness*, *fireball* (DC 16), *flaming sphere* (DC 15), *poison* (DC 17), *unholy aura* (DC 21), *wall of fire* (DC 17); 1/day -- *blasphemy*, *contagion* (DC 16), *desecrate*, *dispel magic*, *horrid wilting* (DC 21), *summon monster VII* (Huge fire elemental), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 17). Caster level 15th.

Outsider Traits: Brimstone cannot be raised or resurrected (though a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore life).

Possessions: +3 *longspear*, *bracers of armor* +4, *ring of protection* +1, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, adamantine necklace set with rubies (5,000 gp).

About the Author

By day, Andy Collins works as a senior designer in the Roleplaying R&D department at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His credits include the *Player's Handbook* v.3.5, the *Draconomicon*, and the upcoming *Unearthed Arcana*. By night, however, he fights crime as a masked vigilante. Or maybe not.

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